

Writers and Radio: How Literary Authors Have Made Use of the Medium Over a Century

Abstract

Literary authors have made use of the radio as a political, technological, cultural, and social medium from its infancy. A wide range of complex relationships can be recognised when looking at their ways of dealing with the medium, of writing for the radio, and of working with radio stations. While a huge body of studies provide rich material of this utilisation, a systematic framework for the analysis of these practices has been glaringly absent. Deduced by a methodological framework we propose a systematisation and typify five clusters of literary practices. Such a systematic overview provides insights into the nature of the alliances and helps to understand the role of literary authors in radio cultures and their contribution to the culture of radio in the so-called 'radio century'.

KEYWORDS: Literature, cultural production, radio art, public service media

Introduction

Literary authors, novelists, playwrights, poets, many of them have made use of the radio as a political, technological, cultural, and social medium from its infancy. Writers can be considered to be actors in a field of cultural production. In order to focus on their various practices, the question I pose is: What kind of actions can be observed with regard to the radio? A wide range of complex relationships can be revealed when looking at women, men, and their ways of dealing with the medium, of writing for the radio, and of working with radio stations. Sometimes their active involvement is symbiotic, often it is more or less ambivalent, and, in some rare cases, poets resist the medium considering it a hostile force. As a rule, however, literary authors are more or less enthusiastic about the possibilities afforded by the acoustic medium and welcome it as a partner. In an exception to this rule, they often consider the institution and the apparatus as a threat to their aesthetic and literary work; they refer to the radio as an adversary and avoid it at all costs.

While looking at various practices over the past century, it is evident that there is not a historical linear development that can be mapped out. There is no evidence for a trajectory that began in the early 20th century with a relationship that improved over time to the point where we are at today. What can be observed, however, is an array of examples, which provides deep insights into the nature of these alliances in what can be called the ‘radio century’. This ‘century’ started somewhere between the late 1910s and the early 1920s and extends to our current age of digitalisation, mobilisation, and what is widely called the age of ‘deep mediatisation’¹ in which radio and its cultural programming faces tremendous changes.

This attempt to provide an overview of the ways the medium of radio has been utilised is systematised here into five clusters. They reveal the most significant and relevant ways in which writers have been interacting with radio. The decision to typify these five clusters is deduced both by an overview of emerging research as well as by a methodological framework that has been applied to analyse the relationships of writers with the medium. Each of the five paths in this article highlights one of the facets in which literary authors write and publish their work by utilising radio’s technological, cultural and societal affordances. In so doing, examples from various countries can be highlighted. However, there will be a focus on German and British case studies due to the language and cultural background of the researcher. Readers from other countries can easily enrich these paradigmatic clusters by applying examples of similar or, at times, identical relationships of writers with the medium of radio to their own contexts.

This article on the first one-hundred years of radio does not want to neglect a discussion on the future. That is why some critical prospects will be proposed. Prospects take the current debate on ‘public value’ and ‘contribution to society’ as a point of departure and ask: What will writers’ use of radio in the future be in 2119? It would be presumptuous to assume a clear perspective on this. Nevertheless, it could provide, at the very least, an outline of some of the challenges writers and the medium radio might face in the decades ahead.

Writers and radio: The field of research

There is a breadth of studies that have been conducted in this field. Since the 1980s, literary scholars have become increasingly aware of the media when applying analysis to writers’ working and publishing practices. Before this turn, authors’ literary work for the media was widely neglected by academics. For quite a long time they preferred to study novels and poems published in books or in literary journals and magazines. Radio work was considered to be volatile, unartistic, a by-product, not worth mentioning, something that writers only do for money. In Germany, the turn to in-depth research can be marked, for example, by a series of conferences at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv (German Literature Archive) in Marbach in the 1990s. This new media-historical perspective was addressed by the title *Buch, Buchhandel, Rundfunk* (Book, publishing industry, broadcasting). In three sequential conferences the interrelationship between these ways of writing and publishing were analysed.² Along with this attempt to bring together literary studies and media studies, several studies were published that embed literary

work in the literature market in Germany³ and many publications dealt with German authors from the post-war period.⁴

In other countries, 'writers and the media' also became an emerging topic. Since the 2000s, in France, Pierre-Marie Héron has hosted 'les écrivains hommes de radio'. He and his fellow contributors have focused on many French authors including Taos Amrouche, Michel Butor, Jean Cocteau, Marguerite Duras, André Malraux, and Nathalie Sarraute. In the course of these events, their ambition was less focused on methodological questions and systematisation than on prospecting, illuminating attitudes, experiences, partly collective, partly individual ('ambition est moins d'étude méthodique et synthétique que de prospection, éclairant des attitudes, des expériences, des aventures en partie collective, en partie individuelles'). In the same context, Héron explained in 2003 that one aim of his research concerns literary work and the mediatisation of the writer ('du souci de l'œuvre à la médiatisation de l'écrivain').⁵ In his 2010 study, Héron analysed how a series of fifteen-minute interviews became a new genre in French cultural programming after 1949 and encouraged some of the 'écrivains au micro' to create a new poetic art form, respectively a verbal creation in front of the microphone ('un premier art poétique' respectively 'une création verbale, en présence du micro').⁶

The richest material has been provided by British academics so far. Several studies have been published within a strand of research that is dealing with ideas of *Radio Modernism* or *Broadcasting Modernism*.⁷ In 2015, Debra Rae Cohen and Michael Coyle looked back on 'the first ten years of the 'sonic turn' in modernist studies'⁸, and more recently, in a special issue on 'Radio Modernisms', Aasiya Lodhi and Amanda Wrigley brought together literary and media scholars 'with research interests in BBC Radio's imaginative programming from the mid-twentieth century.'⁹ More and more attention has been paid to the public service broadcasting institution BBC and to modernist authors' fascination with radio including Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, T.S. Eliot, Samuel Beckett, and the loose collective called 'Bloomsbury Group'¹⁰. In his 'afterword' for the 'Radio Modernisms' issue, David Hendy summarised current research interests in the 'cross-currents of influence', 'radio's relationship with modernism – and modernism's relationship with radio' and welcomed that 'two scholarly communities', the literary and the radio scholars were finally coming together.¹¹

The body of research mentioned above is taken as a starting point for the systematic overview of writers' use of the radio. Especially David Hendy's emphasis on the broadcasting institutions as loci of modernist creativity and on the creative practices they engage in, is a focal point of this article.¹² My attempt is built on several similar projects conducted by myself since the 1990s, which provide a range of empirical and source-based knowledge on the topic at hand. These projects dealt with several German authors and their radio work, covering the time of the Weimar Republic, the 'Third Reich', the post-war years, and the 1950s when the emerging public service broadcasters in West Germany committed themselves to a cultural mission. Such studies have also included current developments and the ways in which contemporary writers deal with the radio today.¹³ One dominant strand in this research has always been an in-depth analysis of these programmes' offerings. What at first glance may appear to be something quite simple turns out to be something much more complex. This is because, in many cases, the

extent to which writers' media work long remained undetermined and led to a large gap in quality research on the topic. The research was conducted with reference to written and sound archives as well as the archives of the respective authors. Correspondences between authors and the broadcasting editors revealed rich information not only about the extent of radio work carried out but also on the writers' and editors' strategies and goals. Last, but not least, radio magazines were analysed in a systematic way as, in the past especially, they offered a wealth of material on the cultural programming of the era. In so doing, one approach in particular has proved most advantageous: the analysis of radiographies considered as a chronological list of all the output of an author on air, supplemented by commentaries that include all the information about the process of working on radio production.¹⁴

Writers and radio: How to explore their relationships?

Today, almost every study on a well-known writer includes a chapter or at least some mention of their media work. While these studies provide rich material that reveals the ways in which the author worked with the media, a systematic framework for the analysis of these practices has been glaringly absent. This attempt to systematically overview the utilisation of radio by literary artists is an initial step towards just such a goal.

I will begin by reflecting on the age of mass media by introducing the term 'media ensemble'.¹⁵ Since the 1880s, the amount of available media has steadily increased. After World War I, radio is but one medium making up part of the 'media ensemble'. And currently, radio is but one medium that sits alongside print, film, television, digital, and social media. Writers are confronted with the respective media ensemble of their time and have to deal with the opportunities afforded by them all. For the purposes of writing and publishing, they can decide which media to take advantage of. This article only deals with radio, meaning that I question writers' decisions for their use of this specific medium.

In order to pinpoint their reasons for choosing radio and how they have made use of it, Harro Segeberg's 'Medienarbeiter' concept is adopted. Segeberg developed this concept to focus on 'working men' and their work in and with media.¹⁶ He positioned literary studies within the context of technology history and media history and focused on the interrelation of literature, technology, and media. Among all the dimensions one can scrutinise with his concept, this article takes one aspect seriously – the 'multi-faceted perspective on working for a 'new' medium and the re-working of an 'old' medium' ('Mehrfachperspektive einer Arbeit im 'neuen' Medium und einer Umarbeitung des 'alten' Mediums').¹⁷ Segeberg summarised his approach as the context in which the modern author coming together with radio can decide whether he works with the new medium, for it, or about it.

In order to answer this research question, a sociology of literature approach can be adopted. Perhaps the most influential theoretical model was provided by Pierre Bourdieu who introduced a way of analysing social processes in terms of actors in a field and of actions and strategies for attaining and holding positions in each field. His complex and often revised 'field' concept has been adapted for several areas of the social world, including the literary field,¹⁸

which focuses on the author and his or her decisions to make the most of their literary actions. Reinhold Viehoff tried to take such an approach in 1998 when he discussed writers and their relationship with radio in Germany during the post-war period. He looked at three dimensions of the literary medium – radio as a prominent distributor of literature, radio as a prominent factor in literary production, and radio as playing a prominent role in literary patronage. In doing so, he only sketched out three ways of how authors can solve – what he calls – a literary problem: by using the radio as a technology, as an institution, and as an aesthetic means. However, Viehoff did not follow this classification very systematically in his article and encouraged further research on radio as a literary medium that ‘should be in the future focused as a means of widening literary actions.’¹⁹

This study attempts to do so and go one step further. By looking at writers’ use of radio the various actions and practices involved can be demonstrated in five clusters. The first deals with the specific mediality of radio that is orality. The second category focuses on the technical possibilities afforded by radio. In general, these possibilities have widely been discussed in terms of radiophone and radiophonic. The third and the fourth categories deal with dissemination, reach, and impact. Communication via the mass medium of radio has always been considered as an opportunity to gain access to listeners and influence their ways of thinking and acting. From the number of examples in this wide field, the use of the radio for the dissemination and discussion of certain topics in the public sphere is distinguished from the explicitly political use of radio for propaganda and the broadcasting of hatred. The final category rests on the fact that a large number of writers do not only write *for* the medium but also, at least occasionally, work *with* radio stations as freelancers or employees, as journalists, editors, or practitioners. These five categories are discussed in the next section.

Writers’ use of radio

Writers embrace radio as an oral medium

Radio established itself into the media ensemble of the late 1910s and early 1920s. While the press confined itself with written and illustrated texts, radio offered audiences direct acoustic and oral exchange. This was considered a promising advantage. The new medium was based on the transmission of electro-acoustical signals – at first *live* signals, as recording technologies were not invented and introduced until several years later. Leaving the transmission of music gramophone records and shellacs aside, in its infancy, radio was a strictly *live* medium when it comes to speaking and airing. Theoretical appreciations of the medium mainly circled around speech addressed to an audience wearing headphones and later sitting in front of loudspeakers. Radio producers yearned to be a lone voice in the ether and believed that words come to the listeners’ ears. An emphasis on the audience lending their ears to the individual broadcaster’s voice was widely expressed at the time. ‘The Listener’ was initially the title of the *Journal of the Wireless League* (first published on 24 March 1926). Three years later, it became the brand name for the BBC’s radio magazine. Between 1929 and 1991, a wealth of writers’ texts broadcast by

the BBC were published in print. It served as a repository and place of record for those radio programmes that were establishing themselves within the public imagination.²⁰ In 1931, *Rufer und Hörer*, a German monthly journal, went into publication and sought to describe radio as a relation between two actors: one delivering a clear message and one receiving and thinking through this message. This hierarchic relation would also lead to the clear command of ‘Hör zu!’ (Listen!) that subsequently became the title of Germany’s most successful radio magazine of the post-war years.

Writers whose aim it was to recount stories in the oral tradition grasped the potential of radio, an all-new acoustic medium, to foster community. Beyond the examples of British modernist authors, an outstanding German example can be seen in a conference hosted by the Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft (RRG) and the Sektion für Dichtung (Literary Section) of the Preußische Akademie der Künste (Prussian Academy of Arts) in 1929 in Kassel. The German broadcasting authority RRG and the Sektion für Dichtung invited several prominent writers to discuss the new opportunities afforded by radio. Among them was Alfred Döblin (1878-1957). He initiated the discussion with his paper on literature and radio (‘Literatur und Rundfunk’). His contribution argued against writers’ indifference to radio (‘Gleichgültigkeit der Schriftsteller gegen den Rundfunk’) and welcomed this new acoustic medium as a potential breeding ground for literature (Mutterboden jeder Literatur).²¹ His enthusiasm to become a ‘Sprechsteller’ instead of a ‘Schriftsteller’, coined the neologism of ‘speaking’ (sprechen) to replace the act of ‘writing’ (schreiben/Schrift).²² Of course, Döblin noted that this new orality was something quite distinct from the spoken language. For him, radio was an artificial technical medium (‘künstliches, sehr künstliches technisches Mittel’), but, however, a medium that expresses literature through pure sound (‘Immerhin wird hier der Literatur wieder die tönende Sprache angeboten, und das ist ein großer Gewinn (...). Es heißt jetzt Dinge machen, die gesprochen werden, die tönen’). Döblin’s novel, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* published in the same year recounts the sonic experiences of its protagonist Franz Biberkopf as he wanders the roaring Berlin metropolis.²³ Döblin, who was highly engaged with the radio station Berliner Funk-Stunde also tried to adapt his novel into a radio play in 1930. However, the audio version of *Die Geschichte vom Franz Biberkopf* failed to air in the 1930s because the author and the producers agreed that not all the sonic dimensions of Döblin’s story could be adequately reproduced by the technical equipment available to them at the time.

Embracing radio as a sonic and oral medium is by no means strictly a concept of the past. There has always been a long tradition of using radio for stories that deal with notions of dreams, inner thoughts, and self-reflection. Radio drama theorists have often claimed that there is a kind of inward stage (‘innere Bühne’).²⁴ While listening to the voices, noises, acoustic signals, and spatial atmospheres transmitted via the wireless, the individual listener imagines his or her own reality. In Germany, many radio plays, especially between the 1930s and the 1960s, put this concept of the inward stage into practice. However, what was initially considered to be radio-genic and modern, was attacked in the late 1960s and 1970s as a conservative form pacifying the listener. The representatives of the so-called ‘new radio play’ (‘Neues Hörspiel’) put emphasis on the concrete materiality of language, on abrupt cutting instead of fading in and fading out, asking for a critical listener who analyses what is heard.²⁵

One of the most influential productions of this kind of ‘play for voices’ was *Under Milk Wood*, a radio drama by the Welsh author and radio actor Dylan Thomas (1904-1953). His play about the dreams and innermost thoughts of the inhabitants of the fictional Welsh fishing village of Llareggub was commissioned by the BBC in 1954 and has initiated a series of references in other media. Up to the present day, writers use the radio to tell stories that could not be presented via another medium – or at least not so perfectly. One recent example is Susann Maria Hempel’s story of a former prisoner of the German Democratic Republic and the experience of his amnesia. Hempel’s production used radio’s acoustic possibilities to tell the story in the form of an interview interspersed with flashbacks, which all made use of her voice. Her first radio play *Auf der Suche nach den verlorenen Seelenatomen* (In search of the lost atoms of the soul) was produced and aired in November 2018 and was awarded the Hörspiel des Jahres (Best Radio Play of the Year) prize and the Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden (Blind War Veterans’ Prize for Radio Plays) in May 2019.²⁶ This recent example reveals that – instead of the hierarchic relationship of ‘Rufer’ and ‘Hörer’ as maintained in the past – writers make use of the radio as a medium of intimate complicity that invites their audience to become aural witnesses.

Writers’ use of radiophonic possibilities

When looking at the ways in which writers interact with radio some technological concerns come to light. Some writers do not like to deal with all the technical devices necessary to record, engineer, edit, and broadcast radio productions. They prefer to stick to their writing desks, to rely on their familiar tools, their pens and their typewriters, and to concentrate on what they consider to be the pure word. They neglect the technological possibilities afforded by radio. Since the early days of the medium, one can read in various reports and minutes from staff meetings about writers who were often invited to visit radio studios to learn from the technicians there. They should become more familiar with the technical apparatus of radio broadcasting, with microphones, magnetic tape recorders, mixing consoles, mono- and stereophonic acoustic spaces.

In the early 1950s, the Nordwestdeutsche Rundfunk, the public service broadcaster in North Germany invited authors to its Rundfunkschule (Broadcasting School). A range of two- or three-day courses were provided. The program aimed to assist authors in the practice of writing for the medium and the ways in which they could make use of the aesthetic potential of radio’s technical apparatus. Among the invitees were writers who later became prominent figures in the German literary world.

The BBC ran similar programs in Britain with their Radiophonic Workshops. In 1958, the BBC Radiophonic Workshop was established as a distinct department within the corporation to experiment in the field of sound design, electronic music, and audio technology. Until its closure in 1998, the Workshop was particularly well known for its innovation and pioneering work in sound effect design and producing outstanding soundtracks for both radio and television productions.²⁷ What was particularly striking, however, was the vigour with which several literary figures leapt at the opportunity to make use of the technical affordances the Workshop offered. In 1966,

the Austrian poet Ernst Jandl (1925–2000) was invited by the Scottish poet George MacBeth to join one of the Workshops. Jandl, an up-and-coming young writer, well known for his performance at the International Poetry Reading at the Royal Albert Hall in June 1965, took up the invitation. During his five-day stay between 11 and 15 July 1966 he worked ‘on a sound treatment of a sequence of his poem in the original German’, as MacBeth explained to the listeners of BBC 3 on December 13, 1966.²⁸ Jandl adapted some of his written texts and made use of radiophonic techniques provided by the Workshop. This included the speeding up and slowing down of tapes, multitrack recording, echo effects and feedback and was announced as such in a teaser for the audience of the BBC’s Third Programme.²⁹ From this initial radio performance, Jandl established himself as one of the leaders of the international sound and concrete poetry movement. Shortly afterwards, he was invited by several public service broadcasters in the Federated Republic of Germany to develop a radio play that explored the possibilities of stereophony. Although he had to overcome adversities by proponents of the inner play of imagination, he gladly accepted the invitation. In late November 1968, he – along with his Austrian colleague Friederike Mayröcker (b. 1924) – produced the fifteen-minute play *Fünf Mann Menschen* (Five man people), which can be considered, historically, as the first concrete radio play. It won many awards and stimulated a new way of storytelling that would come to be known as the ‘new radio play’ (‘Neues Hörspiel’).

These examples illustrate how some writers were very open to the possibilities that radiophonic technologies and services could provide for their craft. As artists, they were able to make use of new technology to express themselves in ways that were simply not possible through the written word. Current challenges to writers and their use of the audio form lie in digitalisation and the burgeoning need for new forms of storytelling. It is no coincidence that the last Radio Drama Workshop, managed by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and hosted by Radio România in June 2018 was titled ‘Branching Out’. It placed ‘digital storytelling’ firmly on the agenda.³⁰ A new creativity is emerging – artists can now develop their artwork through increasingly accessible digital tools. They often have their own studios and advanced technical equipment, which enables them to produce audio productions or at least to pre-produce major parts of a final version. They can also go beyond the broadcasting institutions and distribute their content through a range of digital social platforms and podcasts.³¹ Radiophonic writers are increasingly entering the realm of technical audio production and are often referred to as ‘producers’ in their own right.

Writers deal with the impact of the radio

Moving on from aesthetic concerns, I will now turn to a comprehension of radio as both a social and political medium. Radio rapidly became a globally popular mass medium and much has been said about its potential to reach far away others and influence consensus on mass scale. Radio can be used to propagate both valid information and disinformation and those placed in front of a microphone often assume that their work will have an impact. However, before taking a look at the phenomena of propaganda and wartime broadcasting, I will look again at writers but this time in terms of their perceived significance of radio broadcasting.

Orson Welles' radio adaptation of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* broadcast as the Halloween edition of the *Mercury Theatre on the Air* program on the Columbia Broadcasting Network in 1938 is alleged to have induced panic in much of its audience as a consequence of its use of radiophonics where it adopted the tone of a serious news programme. Portraying the events of the original novel through journalistic tropes such as 'breaking news', reportage, and interviews with actors portraying witnesses cast this particular broadcast as a legendary moment in the incredible influence of mass broadcasting. However, critical analysis after the fact revealed quite plainly that the programme did not in fact cause a mass panic.³² What it led to instead was the *myth* of radio's supposed impact highlighting that a particular, dominant way of thinking about radio's influence on society had been established or manufactured.

A litany of historical examples could be brought up here but for now, I will move to the near-present. In 2013, the Swedish author and literary scholar, Sara Danius (1962-2019) became the first woman to be elected as chair of the selection committee of the Nobel Prize for Literature. In light of a sex and financial scandal involving Jean-Claude Arnault, a leading figure in the Swedish literary scene, Danius resigned from the Swedish Academy in April 2018. She decided to use the Swedish radio programme *Sommar*, a prominent show with a long history broadcast on and around Midsummer's Day, to reveal details of the toxic and misogynistic culture at the Academy. On August 18, 2018, Danius used the radio to tell a story of scandal, of affairs that occurred behind closed doors and she did so very successfully, subsequently stimulating debate on the issues of misogyny in her home country of Sweden as well as bringing the issue to the attention of the world's media. Because of her actions and resignation from the Academy, as well of those of several other colleagues on the board, no Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded in 2018. However, the prize was re-established by the Nobel Foundation in 2019.³³

Writers are in the active service of propaganda

The path I have taken to examine the influence radio can have on social and political affairs will now cast an eye on those writers who have become involved with broadcast propaganda and, at times, the 'broadcasting of hatred'.³⁴ Here I deal with radio and its implementation as a means of transnational communication. Since its infancy, radio has been harnessed as a tool through which an international, targeted or otherwise, audience can be addressed. The one-hundred years of the medium's history has coincided with what has often been referred to as a 'war on the ether' and 'aerial warfare' marked by one World War, the long lasting ideological struggle of the Cold War and numerous civil wars and ethnic conflicts.³⁵

One spectacular episode reveals how intellectual capacities and high aesthetic expressiveness can go hand in hand with racist, inhuman, and totalitarian opinions, the poet Ezra Pound's broadcasts for Radio Roma during World War II. Pound's more than one-hundred speeches are the most prominent examples of what has been discussed as the axis of the avant-garde and fascism. Along with Pound, the Italian futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and the German poet Gottfried Benn are of note. Since 1924, Pound (1885-1972) lived in Italy. In 1933, he became a fascist sympathiser in support of Benito Mussolini. This exponent of modern lyric

poetry positioned himself as figure leading the fight against usury and international capitalism while, at the same time, campaigning for the exceptional role of the artist in the society. He expressed this way of thinking in his collection of poems *Cantos* as well as in a variety of radio texts. Living in Rapallo, Pound wrote most of his manuscripts at home and sometimes travelled to Rome to pre-record a series of up to ten- or twenty-minute speeches. These were broadcast by Radio Roma from 1940 until the fall of the Fascist government in July 1943.³⁶ Targeted primarily at a US-American audience, Pound criticised the President of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, the Jewish community, and the capitalist world in what is considered to be quite an incoherent way. Most of these speeches beginning with the announcement 'Ezra Pound speaking' were recorded by the Federal Communications Commission in the United States. Based on the crime of broadcasting for the enemy, he was charged with treason and imprisoned until 1958.

That which leads to disapproval can also result in consent. The Nobel Prize laureate Thomas Mann (1875–1955) was widely admired as an author who refused to deal with politics and get involved in party-political struggles. However, the Nazi regime forced him to leave his homeland. He became politically active around 1936 and began writing political essays and giving speeches. During the war, he accepted an invitation from the BBC to engage in the 'war on the ether'. Initially, Mann wrote brief texts that he referred to as 'telegrams'. They were sent from Los Angeles to London where a presenter would then read them out on the radio (November 1940–February 1941). From March 1941 onwards, Mann went to the Columbia Studios in Hollywood and recorded a set of phonographic discs, which would be transported to London to be broadcast on a regular basis on the BBC's *German Service* programme. The German target audience were addressed with the words 'Deutsche Hörer!' (German listeners!). Until May 1944, Thomas Mann sent approximately fifty radio messages to his compatriots, sometimes warning them, sometimes admonishing them, always trying to persuade them. Although no one can really say if there was any real impact on the war as a result of his radio work, another kind of impact was clear post-armistice: Mann was widely despised in Germany and blamed as a traitor to the Fatherland. The neglect of his radio work went hand in hand with this resistance. The 'Deutsche Hörer!' broadcasts were only published in print in Stockholm by Bermann-Fischer Verlag, the publishing house in exile, and it was not until 1974, before the release of his *Ton- und Filmaufnahmen* (sound and film recordings) that his wartime radio work was added to his oeuvre.³⁷

Writers work with the stations

One way writers make use of radio is to earn an income from broadcasting institutions. Authors often remain freelance but occasionally they write so many texts for the radio that they become fully dependent on the income it generated. Authors often become contracted employees of a radio station and work together as journalists, editors, producers, translators, and so on.

Writers in exile especially have often scouted for opportunities to work with broadcasters based in their host countries and to earn at least some money from occasional contributions to

the stations' programming. During World War II, a number of exiled German-speaking novelists, playwrights, and poets would provide material for Radio Moscow; two notable examples are Friedrich Wolf and Hedda Zinner. Other writers met at the BBC where they worked for the German Service among the likes of Robert Lucas, Bruno Adler, Grete Fischer, and Hermynia Zur Mühlen.³⁸ The same can be said for exiled writers and their work for stations such as Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe during the Cold War. Sergei Donatowitsch Dowlatov (1941–1990), a Russian novelist who migrated to New York in 1978, wrote for several newspapers and periodicals while working for Radio Liberty presenting programmes on Russian poets interspersed with satirical sketches about Soviet life. In this way, he was able to remain in his home country while gaining income by transmitting his literary work to a Russian for a foreign broadcaster.³⁹

Beyond these political scenarios, writers have consistently held employee status throughout the history of radio. In 1925, Friedrich Bischoff, a Silesian novelist, became head of the Schlesische Funkstunde, a radio station in Silesia; in the same year, Ernst Hardt, a prominent poet and playwright, took over the directorate of the Westdeutsche Rundfunk AG, a station based in Cologne. Following World War II, several German and Austrian authors worked for public service broadcasters in Stuttgart, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Cologne, and Vienna. The Austrian Ingeborg Bachmann worked with Rot-Weiß-Rot as a scriptwriter, and the well-reputed novelist Martin Walser began his career as a journalist and worked for the public service station in Stuttgart until 1955. The novelist Ernst Schnabel initially headed cultural programming in Hamburg and later became director of the Hamburg-based station Funkhaus Hamburg, part of the Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk until 1955. Finally, the experimental author Jürgen Becker successfully headed the radio drama department of Deutschlandfunk between 1974 and 1993.

Perhaps Germany's most prominent example was Alfred Andersch. The novelist and poet became co-editor of the post-war newspaper *Der Ruf* and was part of the Gruppe 47 literary circle before he headed several 'Nachtprogramme', literary and intellectual broadcasts modelled on the BBC's Third Programme. What makes Andersch particularly interesting is an essay he published in 1976. His text featured Wolfgang Koeppen and Ernst Schnabel, two contemporary radio authors of the time. Andersch complained that these two colleagues were widely neglected by the literary market and he concluded that writing for the radio was in no way equivalent to writing for the book market. Andersch demonstrated a certain tendency toward the hierarchy of print. In so doing, he reported not only on Koeppen and Schnabel but also inadvertently referred to himself. Andersch endured the editorial work he carried out as a broadcaster while suffering under the weight of considering himself an underrated novelist.⁴⁰

Conclusion and outlook

Here, I wish to conclude that radio work has been widely neglected and underestimated as part of the literary oeuvre. It was not until the late 1970s and in 1980s, that scholarly interest began to take an interest in the texts discussed above. From the examples sketched out so far, how instructive these literary practices can be is brought to light.

So, in sum, what does the entanglement of literary artists and radio bring to society? This question is raised against the backdrop of an ongoing debate on cultural programming. The argument that literary or cultural programming is too expensive, that it only represents an elite minority is not a new one. Politicians from across the spectrum of opinion adopt these arguments to exert leverage on public service broadcasters to adopt policies intended to cut back on their spending. Examples of this are widespread across Europe. The 2018 Swiss referendum on the abolition of the licence fee, the ‘No-Billag-Initiative’, however, resulted in public support for its continuation. Proponents of private media systems, though, do not give up the fight easily. In 2018, the Danish government decided to replace the licence fee with a budget subsidised by the state. This kind of approach to funding not only serves to threaten the independence of Denmark’s public service broadcaster Denmark Radio (Danmarks Radio, DR) but amounts to a political attack on the broadcaster and the initial stages of downsizing the relevance of public media in the country. In Germany, we can see this process creeping up slowly. Shutdowns of production studios, the omission of slots for literary and avant-garde programming or the fact that culture programmes in evening time are merged to one national programme during the summer period are a clear demonstration of the German system’s decreasing appetite for public service cultural programming.⁴¹

Public service broadcasters are increasingly forced to prove their legitimacy. They are required to issue public reports on their spending. They must demonstrate what benefits they provide to the public and how they differ in quality to their privately owned competitors. In short, public service media is under threat and while this is nothing new, there has been a vast trajectory of criticism toward thought provoking cultural, experimental, informational, and educational programming. Since the period of mass-liberalisation of the media sphere and the public sector as a whole, public service broadcasters are forced to legitimise themselves in innovative ways. The BBC went forward with a serious attempt at doing so in 2004 when they published their *Building Public Value* initiative, which argued for an approach that would answer the questions posed by a ‘changing media in a changing society.’⁴² The corporation subsequently adopted a range of management doctrines and introduced the implementation of public value management into other parts of the public cultural sector.⁴³

A recent initiative launched by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) has attempted to harness this approach. Under the umbrella term ‘Contribution to Society,’ it coordinates the various attempts of the member states to deal with public service management. The main focus is on an ‘impact assessment model’ for public service media (PSM). The EBU and its members map four areas to which PSM should contribute: the economy, technology, democracy, and culture and education. In the context of this paper, the latter is critical. The EBU initiative reveals four ways in which PSM activities can have a positive impact on culture and education: cultural life, identity, heritage, and personal enrichment. In terms of the argument being made here, considering PSM as societal players in the cultural field is vital. Within this model, members of the EBU are encouraged to undertake studies in order to formulate impact chains from input to output, reach, outcome, and finally to impact.⁴⁴ The research gap regarding the relationships between literary arts, writers, and PSM is fairly clear.⁴⁵ However, such endeavours could be

useful as we go forward both to legitimise PSM's work in the area of culture and to guarantee writers' use of the radio as a political, technological, cultural, and social medium over another one-hundred years of radio broadcasting.

Notes

1. Nick Couldry, Andreas Hepp, *The Mediated Construction of Reality* (Cambridge; Malden: Polity, 2017).
2. Monika Estermann, Edgar Lersch, ed., *Buch, Buchhandel und Rundfunk 1945-1949 / 1950-1960 / 1968 und die Folgen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997 / 1999 / 2003).
3. See e.g. Knut Hickethier, "Aufbruch in die Mediengesellschaft. Die Gruppe 47 und die Medien," in *Dichter und Richter. Die Gruppe 47 und die deutsche Nachkriegsliteratur. Ausstellung der Akademie der Künste 28. Oktober bis 7. Dezember 1988*, ed. Jürgen Schütte (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1988), 114–123; Thomas Wegmann, ed., *Markt. Literarisch* (Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 2005). Hans-Ulrich Wagner, "Ein symbiotisches Verhältnis. Der Rundfunk und das literarische Leben im Nachkriegsdeutschland," in *Doppelleben. Literarische Szenen aus Nachkriegsdeutschland*, ed. Bernd Busch, Thomas Combrink (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009), 227–236.
4. There can be mentioned only a few studies, e.g.: Jörg Hucklenbroich, Reinhold Viehoff, ed., *Schriftsteller und Rundfunk* (Konstanz: UVK Verlag, 2002); Hans-Ulrich Wagner, *Günter Eich und der Rundfunk. Essay und Dokumentation* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1999); Hans-Ulrich Wagner, "'Eine Spielwiese mit Unendlichkeitscharakter'. Martin Walser und das Hörspiel," in *Literatur im Kontext. Kunst und Medien, Religion und Politik. Festschrift für Walter Schmitz*, ed. Frank Almai, Ulrich Fröschle (Dresden: w.e.b. Universitätsverlag, 2014), 643–690.
5. See Pierre-Marie Héron, "Avant-propos," in *Les écrivains et la radio*, ed. Pierre-Marie Héron (Montpellier: Publications de Montpellier / Inathèque de France, 2003), 5–14. Quotations, 5 and 6. – This quotation and all following quotations in French and German are translated into English by the author.
6. See Pierre-Marie Héron, "Introduction. Repères sur le genre de l'entretien feuilleton à la radio," in *Écrivains au micro. Les entretiens-feuilletons à la radio française dans les années cinquante*, ed. Pierre-Marie Héron (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 9–23. Quotations, 9–10. – A special thanks goes to Professor Héron who provided several of his texts to me that are not available in German libraries.
7. Todd Avery, *Radio Modernism. Literature, Ethics, and the BBC, 1922-1938*. (Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate, 2006); Debra Rae Cohen, Michael Coyle, Jane Lewty, ed., *Broadcasting Modernism*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009).
8. Debra Rae Cohen, Michael Coyle, "Introduction," *Modernist Cultures* 10, no. 1 (2015): 1–5.
9. Assiya Lodhi, Amanda Wrigley, "Introduction: Radio Modernisms. Features, Cultures and the BBC," *Media History* 24, no. 2 (2018): 159–165.
10. See Gregory Whitehead, "Out of the Dark: Notes on the Nobodies of Radio Art," in *Wireless Imagination. Sound, Radio, and the Avant-Garde*, ed. Douglas Kahn, Gregory Whitehead (Cambridge, Mass., London: The MIT Press, 1992), 253–263; Todd Avery, "Desmond MacCarthy, Bloomsbury, and the Aestheticist Ethics of Broadcasting," in *Broadcasting Modernism*, ed. Debra Rae Cohen, Michael Coyle, Jane Lewty (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009), 158–175. A study on the radio work by Samuel Beckett and the avant-garde in the 1950s is published by Hugh Chignell, "British Radio Drama in the Avant-Garde in the 1950s," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 37, no. 4 (2017): 649–664.
11. David Hendy, "Afterword: Radio Modernisms. Features, Cultures and the BBC," *Media History* 24, no. 2 (2018): 283–287.
12. *Ibid.*, 283.
13. See e.g. Hans-Ulrich Wagner, "Radio-Kulturen im medialen Wandel. Eine Standortbestimmung und vier Thesen zur Lage des kulturorientierten Hörfunks," *Medien-Korrespondenz* 67, no. 8-9 (2019): 9–15. An enhanced version of this analysis will be presented at the ECREA Radio Section conference in September 2019 under the title "Radio Cultures in Times of Media Change. Current State and Challenges".
14. Annotated radiographies were published e.g. of the radio work of Günter Eich (1907–1972) (see footnote 4). It will be worked out in a project currently under way that investigates the extensive radio work of the German

- author Siegfried Lenz (1926–2014), see: <https://www.hans-bredow-institut.de/en/projects/siegfried-lenz-how-the-author-uses-the-media>. The research project, supported by the public service broadcaster Norddeutscher Rundfunk in 2019-2020, leads also to a first-ever volume of his radio work [“Radioarbeiten”] within the critical edition of Lenz’ complete works in 2021, commissioned by the publishing house Hoffmann and Campe and the Siegfried Lenz Stiftung.
15. See Andreas Hepp, ‘Communicative Figurations’ research network, *Transforming Communications. Media-related Changes in Times of Deep Mediatization* (Communicative Figurations. Working Paper 16) (Bremen: Research Network ‘Communicative Figurations’, 2017).
 16. Harro Segeberg, *Literatur im Medienzeitalter. Literatur, Technik und Medien seit 1944* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003).
 17. Segeberg, *Literatur im Medienzeitalter*, 49.
 18. See e.g. Joseph Jurt, *Das literarische Feld. Das Konzept Pierre Bourdieus in Theorie und Praxis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995).
 19. Reinhold Viehoff, “Schriftsteller und Hörfunk nach 1945 – ein unterschätztes Verhältnis,” *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 28 (1998): 102–125. Quotation from the abstract in English, 125.
 20. Gale Primary Sources offers “The Listener Historical Archive 1929-1991,” which is online available: <https://www.gale.com/intl/c/the-listener-historical-archive> (paywall).
 21. Alfred Döblin, “Literatur und Rundfunk,” in *Dichtung und Rundfunk. Reden und Gegenreden* (Berlin: RRG, 1930), 8.
 22. Döblin, “Literatur und Rundfunk,” 10.
 23. Cf. Andreas Fickers, “Sounds Familiar: Intermediality and Remediation in the Written, Sonic and Audiovisual Narratives of Berlin Alexanderplatz,” in *Soundscape of the Urban Past. Staged Sound as Mediated Cultural Heritage*, ed. Karin Bijsterveld (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013), 77–115.
 24. The most influential theoretical essay on a supposed ‘inward stage’ was published in 1932 by a radio practitioner before and during the “Third Reich”: Richard Kolb, *Horoskop des Hörspiels* (Berlin-Schöneberg: Hesse, 1932). In the post-war time this concept was reformulated by a novelist and radio author: Erwin Wickert, “Die innere Bühne,” *Akzente* 1, no. 6 (1954): 505–514. Cf. Luisa Drews, “Disability Media Aesthetics: Voices of the War-Disabled People in Post-War German-Language Radio Plays,” *Radio Journal: International Studies on Broadcast & Audio Media* 17, no. 1 (2019): 47–62.
 25. About the struggle of the “Neues Hörspiel”-avant-garde against the traditional radio drama see: Hans-Ulrich Wagner, “Träume. Die Geschichte des Hörspiels,” in *Sound des Jahrhunderts. Geräusche, Töne, Stimmen – 1889 bis heute*, ed. Gerhard Paul, Ralph Schock (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2013), 364–369.
 26. As a jury member for the “Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden”, I reported on Hempel’s radio play and the annual competition in *Medien-Korrespondenz* 10 (10 May 2019): 3–6. Online: <https://www.medienkorrespondenz.de/leitartikel/artikel/kunststuecke-und-knallegende.html>.
 27. Louis Niebur, *Special Sound: The Creation and Legacy of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop* (New York; London: Oxford University Press, 2010).
 28. The introduction by MacBeth is published in: Ernst Jandl, *13 radiophone Texte* (München: S’Press Tonbandverlag, 1977). The record is published on CD: Ernst Jandl, *13 radiophone texte & das röcheln der mona lisa* (München: intermedium records, 2002) (CD-edition and booklet). An in-depth analysis of the composition of Jandl’s 13 radiophonic texts is given by Frieder von Ammon, „Musik für das 20. Jahrhundert. Ernst Jandls 13 radiophone texte,” in *Experimentelle Poesie in Mitteleuropa. Texte – Kontexte – Material – Raum*, ed. Klaus Schenk et al. (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2016), 119–135.
 29. An announcement and a teaser text like these can easily be researched via the BBC Genome database on <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/search/0/20>. The BBC Genome database provides a searchable tool for all BBC programmes listed in the magazine *Radio Times*.
 30. Information about the EBU Drama Group are available on: <https://www.ebu.ch/groups/radio/drama>; on the EBU Radio Drama Workshop on: <https://www.ebu.ch/events/2018/06/ebu-radio-drama-workshop>.
 31. Cf. Dario Llinares, Neil Fox, Richard Berry, ed., *Podcasting: New Aural Cultures and Digital Media* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Ellen McCracken, ed., *The Serial Podcast and Storytelling in the Digital Age* (New York: Routledge, 2017).
 32. There are many publications on Welles’ “War of the Worlds”. Among them see especially: W. Joseph Campbell, *Getting it Wrong. Ten of the Greatest Misreported Stories in American Journalism* (Berkeley: University of California

- Press 2010), 26-44; A. Brad Schwartz, *Broadcast Hysteria: Orson Welles' War of the Worlds and the Art of Fake News* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015).
33. The interview with Sara Danius is still online: <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/avsnitt/1077323?programid=2071>. The article in the *Expressen* is available on: <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/inloggad/bakom-kulisserna-pa-lys-snarsuccen/>; the press release of the Swedish Academy on: <https://www.svenskaakademien.se/en/press/the-nobel-prize-in-literature>. Many thanks to Professor Marie Cronqvist from Lund University who hinted me at this example.
 34. Cf. Keith Somerville, *Radio Propaganda and the Broadcasting of Hatred. Historical Development and Definitions* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
 35. To name only a few studies: On the propaganda during WWII: Nelson Ribeiro, Hans-Ulrich Wagner, Agnieszka Morriss, "International Radio Broadcasting during World War II: Propaganda and Public Diplomacy through the Airwaves," in *The Handbook of European Communication History*, ed. Klaus Arnold, Paschal Preston, Susanne Kinnebrock (London: Wiley, 2020), 173–188; On the Cold War on Air: Alexander Badenoch, Andreas Fickers, Christian Henrich-Franke, *Airy Curtains in the European Ether. Broadcasting and the Cold War* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2013); on 'hate radio' within the Rwanda Genocide: Keith Somerville, "Rwanda: Genocide, Hate Radio and the Power of the Broadcast Word", in *Radio Propaganda and the Broadcasting of Hatred. Historical Development and Definitions* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 152–207.
 36. Cf. the edition of Pound's radio speeches: Leonard W. Dobb, ed., 'Ezra Pound Speaking.' *Radio Speeches of World War II* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978).
 37. Cf. Sonja Valentin, 'Steine in Hitlers Fenster.' *Thomas Manns Radiosendungen Deutsche Hörer! 1940–1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015); Hans-Ulrich Wagner, *Rückkehr in die Fremde? Remigranten und Rundfunk in Deutschland 1945 bis 1955* (Berlin: Vistas, 2000). The edition of 1945 is: *Deutsche Hörer! 55 Radiosendungen nach Deutschland von Thomas Mann. 2.*, expanded edition (Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer, 1945). The supplement of 1974 is: *Thomas Mann. Ton- und Filmaufnahmen. Ein Verzeichnis*. Zusammengestellt und bearbeitet von Ernst Loewy. Ed. Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer, 1974) (Supplement to Thomas Mann. Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden).
 38. Cf. Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove, ed., 'Stimme der Wahrheit.' *German-Language Broadcasting by the BBC* (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2003).
 39. Cf. Anna S. Kolchina, "Писатели-эмигранты у микрофона «Радио Свобода» в 1970-1980 годы," (Emigrant writers on air at Radio Liberty in the 1970s and 1980s) *History of Mass Communication* 3 (2010), <http://www.media-scope.ru/en/624>; additional biographical information is available on a blog entry of the Derzhavin Institute, St. Petersburg, see: <https://derzhavin.com/en/pages/907/87/>. Many thanks to Daria Chepurko, B.A. student from Ukraine at Universität Hamburg, who hinted me at this example.
 40. Alfred Andersch, "Die Geheimschreiber," *Merkur*, 30 (1976): 555–563.
 41. The document can be downloaded here: <https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/policies/pdf/bpv.pdf>.
 42. Cf. Jochen Meißner, "Klandestines Sparen. Nicht auftragsgemäß: Wie die ARD-Sender das Hörspiel vernachlässigen," *Medien-Korrespondenz* (28 November 2017), <https://www.medienkorrespondenz.de/leitartikel/artikel/klandestines-sparen.html>.
 43. See especially Richard Collins' analysis of the "Building Public Value"-paper: "The BBC and 'Public Value,'" *Medien und Kommunikationswissenschaft* 55, no. 2 (2007): 164–184.
 44. *Public Service Media Contribution to Society*. Produced by the Media Intelligence Service (MIS) of the European Broadcasting Union. December 2015.
 45. Only in Germany, there were two predecessors. Karla Fohrbeck and Andreas Johannes Wiesand published the study: *Der WDR als Kultur- und Wirtschaftsfaktor* (Berlin: Kohlhammer-Grote, 1989); Twenty years later, in 2009, the Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) and the Deutscher Kulturrat published a study on the broadcasting station WDR as a so-called 'Kulturakteur' (an actor in the field of culture). Deutscher Kulturrat, ed., *Der WDR als Kulturakteur. Anspruch – Erwartung – Wirklichkeit*. (Berlin: Deutscher Kulturrat, 2009).

Biography

Hans-Ulrich Wagner is a senior researcher at the Leibniz Institute for Media Research | Hans-Bredow-Institute in Hamburg. He is spokesman of the research programme 'Knowledge for the media society' and heads the

competence area 'Media history' in it. Several national and international research projects have been undertaken by him, among them an ongoing project on how the German author Siegfried Lenz (1926–2014) was closely connected to public service broadcasting. Starting with his PhD in 1996 on radio plays in the four occupation zones of Germany 1945-1949, Hans-Ulrich has published especially on media and literature, sound history, and public service media. Along with his academic work he has also been a member of juries for radio art awards.